United Nations A/55/PV.18

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting

Saturday, 16 September 2000, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation and Unity of the Republic of Fiji

Mr. Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation and Unity of the Republic of Fiji was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in the welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation, The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Qarase (Fiji): I bring you greetings from the people of the Fiji Islands.

On their behalf, I also convey our warm congratulations to you, Mr. President, along with the pledge of my delegation to support you and to closely cooperate with you in ensuring the success of this session.

To the Secretary-General, I would like to express the sincere gratitude of the people of Fiji for all that the United Nations family is doing every day, in every part of the globe, to bring relief to those in need, and to promote peace, security and development.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome our neighbour and close friend, Tuvalu, as the newest Member of the United Nations. Fiji is very proud to see the flag of this very important Pacific island country taking its place alongside the other 188 Members of the United Nations. We look forward to the admission in the future of more Pacific island States.

I address the Assembly today on behalf of the Interim Administration in Fiji, which I have been entrusted by our President to lead.

In the wake of the coup d'état in my country on 19 May this year, and the political crisis it triggered, my Interim Administration has two very important tasks to undertake within the two-year time frame we have set for ourselves.

First, it is to return Fiji to constitutional democracy and, secondly, it is to stabilize our economy and to lay the foundation for a return to sustained growth and expansion with increased investment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Governments who have shown sympathy and understanding, who recognize the complexities of the situation in Fiji as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, and who readily accept that solutions to the present political crisis can be developed within Fiji, by the people of Fiji themselves, without external interference in any form.

With the end of the cold war and of the dual division it created in world order, it would seem that a

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-64662 (E)

new form of imperialism has emerged along with its twin-brother, neo-colonialism. As if the corrosive influence and impact of their mass culture of consumerism and materialism are not enough, this new form of domination is being propagated by the purists of the liberal democracies, in the name of good governance, human rights, accountability and transparency. In themselves, these are important general standards to ensure the integrity of the system of Government in a country, and the just and fair treatment of its citizens. But what is of concern is that we are being told to apply these standards and values of liberal democracy strictly according to their standards, without regard for the particular or complex circumstances in each country.

Our concern is that some of the fundamental principles upon which this unique world Organization was founded 55 years ago are being eroded and violated — the principles of respect for national sovereignty and of non-interference in the internal affairs of an independent State.

We appreciate that we now live in a closely inter-linked global community, and we are all part of one humankind; we are children of one divine Creator. We must, therefore, be concerned about each other, about our common well being, and common basic standards of rights and freedoms.

This, however, does not give a country the right to impose on another, its standards of democratic governance and what it perceives or considers to be right and acceptable.

If, within each of our countries, we believe and accept that civilized behaviour among the citizenry can only be one based on mutual respect, mutual understanding, and a willingness to assist and support each other, why is it that some countries today should think that these rules of civilized and respectful behaviour within a country, should not apply in their dealings with other members of the international community of nations.

I have raised this point not only because we here at the United Nations should be ever watchful of this disturbing negative trend, but also to remind my own country's friends and neighbours that stridency of political rhetoric, smart sanctions and threats of more sanctions will not really assist us in bringing about a speedy and amicable resolution to our political situation. In fact, the very opposite is true; they have only served to harden attitudes of one community against the other. I, therefore, make a plea to Members of the United Nations to show greater understanding of, and sensitivity to, the complexities of the situation in Fiji.

We are a country of many communities and many cultures. All have contributed to Fiji's development. We have all accepted each other as citizens and as communities, and Fiji is our common and permanent home.

But we also have peculiar features, which bear directly on inter-communal relationships within our society.

We have a total population of around 800,000. Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans make up 52 per cent and are growing at 1.8 per cent every year. The second major ethnic group is our Indian community. They make up 43 per cent of the population, but with a low birth rate and emigration, this is continuing to decrease at 0.3 per cent each year. The other communities in Fiji are Europeans, Chinese and Pacific Islanders.

Ethnicity is only one basis of distinction and difference in Fiji. Then there is land ownership. The indigenous Fijians and Rotumans own, by custom, 84 per cent of all land in Fiji. Much of the best of this, however, is on lease for various purposes, residential, commercial and agricultural, and more than 60 per cent of the tenants are members of our Indian community. Most of the agricultural leases are sugar cane farming leases, and more than 75 per cent of these are held by Indian tenants, and most of these tenants have lived on their leased land for three generations.

In our urban areas, the situation is the reverse. The majority of property owners, of businesses, of those in the professions, of those working for a regular income, are non-Fijians and mostly Indians.

In religion, more than 57 per cent of the population, the indigenous Fijians and Rotumans, and the other minority communities, are mostly Christians. On the other hand, the remaining 43 per cent, the members of the Indian community mostly belong to the Hindu, Muslim and other faiths.

Then there are our culture and value systems. Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans have a hierarchical social structure. Traditional hereditary chiefs and commoners alike have their place and role in society and are bound together by reciprocal obligations of

loyalty, obedience, and of sharing with, and caring for, each other and everyone in the community. Fijians value their democratic rights as individuals, but as a community they know their place in their traditional society.

In our Indian and other communities people are much more individually based. There is, therefore, a greater consciousness of and emphasis on individual rights and freedoms — the right to equality, the importance of education, success in professional life and the security of property rights.

We all live together side by side in Fiji, yet we remain apart, separated by our ethnicity, religion, cultural differences and value systems. We communicate with each other, not through the languages of our communities, but through the English language. With regard to our general standards of living, even though indigenous Fijians and Rotumans own 84 per cent of the land in Fiji, they have, on average, the lowest level of household income, and they also lag well behind the other communities in almost every aspect of life in a rapidly expanding market-based economy.

I have explained all this to highlight the delicate and sensitive nature of our multi-ethnic and multicultural society in Fiji. The crux of our political crisis in Fiji is that the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman communities felt threatened by certain policies which the non-indigenous leadership of the People's Coalition Government had implemented following their decisive victory in our national elections in May 1999. It was this fear and anxiety about their future as the world's only indigenous Fijian and Rotuman community of just over 420,000 people that led to mass demonstrations and ultimately the coup d'état on 19 May this year. It also manifested itself in the mass looting of shops, the destruction of property and threats to people and their families. Unfortunately, and tragically, the victims were mainly members of our Indian community.

It was in this serious and deteriorating law and order situation that the Fiji military forces responded to a request from our police to take direct control of law and order and the protection of citizens. To facilitate this, on 29 May the Fiji military forces abrogated our 1997 Constitution.

However, as the civilian interim Administration, we have ourselves taken over from the army, and, as I have said, we are firmly committed to returning Fiji to constitutional parliamentary democracy. We intend to promulgate a new constitution in August next year. General elections will then follow within 12 months. The new constitution is to be prepared by a constitution commission, which we shall appoint early next month. It will be representative of all our communities and will consult widely throughout the country, giving the public at large every opportunity to submit their advice and recommendations on the new constitution.

I should also mention a new initiative I have taken to deal with the inter-ethnic crisis in Fiji: the establishment of a Ministry of National Reconciliation and Unity, together with a Council for National Reconciliation and Unity. It is my sincere hope that the Council will bring together the representatives of the various communities in our rich, multicultural society, as well as representatives of the various sections of the wider community, including employers, trade unions and civil society, to discuss and make recommendations on various ways by which we can promote greater intercommunal understanding and cooperation.

What we have realized is that it is not enough simply to focus attention on the constitution as the framework for our different communities in Fiji to live together peacefully and harmoniously. We need to do more. We have to build and reinforce foundations for living together in all aspects of our lives in our multi-ethnic and multicultural society. We are making good progress in education, and proposals are now under consideration to broaden the curriculum in schools to include compulsory study of the Fijian language, Fijian culture and the ethno-history and ethno-geography of Fiji. We also need to encourage and promote more social interaction and cohesion at the neighbourhood and community level. Most important, it is my sincere hope that the Council for National Reconciliation and Unity will develop a consensus on national leadership and power-sharing in Fiji. I believe sincerely that the most enduring foundation for unity in Fiji is one that is built in a spirit of give and take, of justice and fairness for all and of responsibility for one another.

Very recently the United Nations launched a Decade, from January 1995 to December 2004, on the theme, "Indigenous people: a new partnership", which seeks the formation of new relationships, founded on mutual respect and understanding between indigenous peoples and States and the United Nations. In the context of Fiji, what we hope to build is a new

partnership between the indigenous Fijian and Rotuman communities and the other communities, as the basis of living together in our multi-ethnic and multicultural society in the twenty-first century.

I again assure the international community that within the two years of our transitional Administration we shall return Fiji to constitutional democracy. A new constitution will address the concerns of indigenous Fijians and Rotumans about their future. At the same time, however, it will also maintain and protect the equal fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens and groups, without distinction on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, or economic and social status.

Indeed, as the interim Prime Minister in the transitional Administration in Fiji, I am committed to building a united Fiji with a multi-ethnic and multicultural society in which all the different communities can live together in peace, harmony and prosperity, in which the aspirations of the Fijians and Rotumans are realized and the paramountcy of their interests is secure and in which the provision of important social services, such as education and health, to all our communities is a priority, so that the quality of life and standard of living of all our people are continuously improving.

Fiji commends and supports the Brahimi report (A/55/305) on peacekeeping. It is a timely and thoughtful report which, if implemented, will considerably enhance the ability of the United Nations to carry out its peacekeeping tasks. With regard to Fiji's continuing participation in United Nations peacekeeping activities, I am pleased to confirm our positive response to the Secretary-General's request for a further increase in our troops serving in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. In that connection, I commend the efforts of all those involved in the Middle East peace process. Fiji earnestly hopes that the negotiations will be successful in resolving longstanding differences and bring about long-term peace in the region.

We in Fiji have been greatly inspired by the positive developments on the Korean peninsula, with the growing rapprochement between the South and the North. We express the hope that the same spirit of goodwill and readiness to enter into dialogue will also spread to the great country of China, between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. With regard to the very important country of Japan, I reaffirm Fiji's support for Japan's admission as a permanent member of the Security Council.

The Secretary-General's report (A/54/2000), "We the Peoples" has inspired the entire United Nations community with its vision of a more humane and more holistic future for our children and our world. We agree entirely that the United Nations should focus not just on the relationship between and among States, but, increasingly, on the well-being and development of the peoples of this world.

Once again, I extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, and best wishes for a successful Millennium Assembly.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation and Unity of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister and Minister for National Reconciliation and Unity of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on being elected to preside over the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and wish you much success as you carry out this important post. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your Namibian predecessor, Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the responsible work and efforts he invested in United Nations activities throughout the year and, in particular, for the role he played in the preparation of the Millennium Summit.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the admission of Tuvalu to the United Nations, another expression of the openness and universal character of this Organization.

The Millennium Summit brought interesting, stimulating ideas embracing the huge potential posed by the experience of the population of the whole planet, formulated in the words of the highest representatives of Member States. The Summit, the most representative gathering ever, gave us a unique opportunity to make a multifaceted review of

challenges the world is facing at the threshold of the new millennium. The unexpectedly positive Summit results are generally being appreciated and approved. However, the implementation of those 32 United Nations Millennium Declaration provisions, as well as of an unprecedented Security Council resolution 1318 (2000), will not be easy, cheap or rapidly attainable.

The start of the 1990s was characterized by buoyancy and great expectations in handling long-term problems connected with the era of Communism in the world, the onset of democracy and the stress on the importance of observing universal human rights. Bound up in this optimism were expectations that were sometimes unrealistic.

Those expectations proved unfeasible in the second half of the decade. The intricate nature of the problems, difficulties in finding lasting solutions, and internal and external crises quite clearly exposed the bounds and the possibilities of the international community, and the United Nations was no exception. Disillusionment and disenchantment sometimes led to the assertion and the defence of utilitarian and other particular interests, which led to feelings of belonging and solidarity being greatly undermined.

The inhabitants of the world, suffering from the ravages of war, poverty, disasters and various forms of oppression, expect actions of us today.

Can we match these expectations? I hope, and firmly believe, that we can. There is no longer time for further devaluation in the significance of the words development, security, cooperation and solidarity. We can no longer abuse the trust and patience of so many people. If reaching a compromise and consensus continues to be impossible for our diplomats, then it will be all the more difficult to find it among States and entities in individual countries.

The United Nations is expected to be able to prove its ability to adapt quickly and carry out internal reform, primarily of the Security Council. The Security Council has to reflect the reality of today, not that of 50 years ago. Only a truly representative and effective Security Council will be able to overcome its current impotence, sometimes veiled in high-sounding but empty phrases. If no remedy is found now, after the Millennium Summit, the United Nations risks loss of credibility, and it will greatly reduce its influence on many processes which are now shaping the world. Here I am thinking especially of those processes we include under the term "globalization".

Globalization does not stop at Forty-second Street. It is rushing around the world with the force of a typhoon, picking up speed as it is fed ever new discoveries in information and communication technology. But globalization is a much more comprehensive phenomenon than the mere standardization of traffic regulations, television systems or bananas. Globalization entails development and human security, as well as poverty and human fear. But it also encompasses human thinking. If it does not embrace solidarity and social justice, it will continue to divide the world between winners and losers, as was mentioned here from this rostrum recently by the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. The United Nations can help with this issue. If it fails, it will be guilty of loosing this crucial opportunity of making the United Nations again into a highly respected Organization able to tackle the most important global problems. We have to find the political will and the means to do so.

I would like to dwell on the topic of peacekeeping a little. What I have said about huge optimism and subsequent disenchantment is just as applicable to this area. I am convinced that lasting solutions to conflicts can only be found by peaceful means and by negotiations between all parties involved. Peacekeeping remains a key instrument wielded by the international community, as it establishes peace and peaceful coexistence among the nations.

We welcome the priority given to peacekeeping last week. The Millennium Summit meetings, together with Mr. Brahimi's report, present a unique opportunity to strengthen the United Nations capacity for peacekeeping operations. Our pledges to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in addressing conflicts at all stages, from prevention to settlement to post-conflict peace-building, should bind the international community from the very moment it approved them last week.

Far-reaching but realistic intentions announced from this rostrum by Minister Vedrine on behalf of the European Union earlier this week thus meet our expectations of how to bring into life the Millennium Summit recommendations, anchored in a firm belief in the United Nations potential.

Any reform of the United Nations would not be complete without reforming its crucial body: the Security Council. Its role is irreplaceable. The decision-making process should respond not only to a change in the nature of today's crises, but also to the necessary comprehensiveness of their solutions. An increase in the effective capacity of the United Nations Secretariat to act via the reorganization of its Department of Peacekeeping Operations, closer cooperation and coordination with regional structures is an integral part of the process. We must look for ways to react quickly, promptly and effectively.

The Czech Republic's approach to the reform of the United Nations Security Council has been voiced many times, and we prove it through our active participation, notably in the open-ended working group of the General Assembly and in the so-called Group of 10. Unfortunately, deliberations on Security Council reform are still short of bringing fruit, being effectively paralysed by the particular interests of several States. The new millennium must soon see a new, enlarged and more representative Security Council, preferably with five additional permanent seats for both developed and developing countries and a few more non-permanent seats. We all have to take to heart the appeal of the Millennium Declaration to further strengthen our efforts in this regard.

Whether for programmes or for peacekeeping, in the new millennium the United Nations needs a sustainable and equitable system of financing. In this regard, we are ready to cooperate actively in discussions about making adjustments for the scale of assessments for both the regular budget and the peacekeeping budget. We express our appreciation to the countries that have announced their preparedness to assume additional financial responsibility by moving voluntarily from group C to group B in the peacekeeping operations scale.

The Czech Republic has voluntarily committed itself to remain in group B, but that is not a solution to the problem. A new scale is urgently needed. However, negotiations about such a scale should not be trapped in endless debates over past unpaid debts. All arrears should be settled before the adoption of a new, and hopefully fairer, scale of assessments.

The anniversary we mark this year of the tragic massacre in Bosnian Srebrenica leads me to the issue of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The international community's objective is to achieve peace, but lasting peace requires justice. In this respect, the International Criminal Tribunals set up by the Security Council are of prime importance. Besides punishing offenders, those International Tribunals have another extremely important function: to prove personal guilt in criminal cases and, thus, to reject the notion of collective guilt. The Tribunals are also important as deterrents for those who may be thinking of easing their way to power over the bodies of the innocent. The Czech Republic therefore highly appreciates the work done by the International Criminal Tribunals to investigate the crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and supports the establishment of a similar body to punish crimes committed in Cambodia and Sierra Leone.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia increased its activities during the last year, bringing to The Hague war criminals who had greater responsibility for crimes committed. War criminals have been prosecuted there, but their political and military leaders remain at large. Recent developments, however, have shown that leaders themselves are not immune from international jurisdiction. That trend is best illustrated by the efforts of the international community to establish an International Criminal Court, which most Member States of the United Nations voted for at Rome in 1998.

The creation of a functioning International Criminal Court, an institution that can play an important role in projecting the principle of justice into international relations and in building an increasingly efficient system for the protection of human rights, is one of the priorities of Czech foreign policy in the field of international law. The Czech Republic is taking all the necessary steps to ratify the Rome Statute as quickly as possible.

Developments in international law are directly bound up with the issue of human rights. I believe that the commitment of the United Nations to the right of every human being to a dignified life in safety should become the focus of attention of all Member States of the United Nations. The long and frequently painful process of making progress in international human rights, at the outset of which stood the terrible experience of the Holocaust, has resulted in the concept of universal human rights. The United Nations is playing a key role in implementing that concept.

However, I think it would be wrong to use our contemporary understanding of human rights when we look back at events long past. In the last decade, the international community demonstrated both its determination not to accept abuses of human rights and its willingness to defend the principle of the personal safety of human beings, even to the detriment of the well-established concept of national sovereignty. Accepting limits to absolute sovereignty for the sake of human rights is a matter of political principle and morality that forms the basis of the values of the United Nations. As I said here last year, we would prefer, if any actions do infringe on the sovereignty of Member States, that those actions be made legitimate by a proper United Nations mandate. Human rights is not a process that has been completed; it is still progressing. However, we should not judge history by the standards of today.

The protection of human rights is one of the fundamental principles of Czech foreign policy. Compared with other international compacts, those on human rights enjoy a privileged status in Czech law. I am pleased that the Czech Republic subscribed during the Millennium Summit to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Due efforts to complete a protocol to the Convention against Torture should be made. The Czech Republic also made an active contribution to the preparation of the Declaration on human rights defenders. I believe that the decision made this year by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the appointment of a special rapporteur of the Secretary-General for human rights will help give rise to the mechanism we need for the implementation of the Declaration.

The last of the more general issues I would like to draw attention to is the issue of sanctions. By that I do not mean weapons embargoes. The Czech Republic views them as instruments capable of reducing the intensity of a conflict, supports them and observes them without reservation. A problem, though, lies in the efficiency and impact of blanket economic sanctions. The last 10 years have provided ample proof that in Cuba, Iraq and Yugoslavia, to take just three examples, blanket economic sanctions, whether declared unilaterally or multilaterally, have been unable to achieve their objective.

Poorly nourished, isolated and sick people are hardly likely to rise up against a governing elite that will never allow the consequences of sanctions to affect it or its faithful supporters. The result is that changes in the conduct of the rulers are even less likely.

Growing globalization and the economic and information interconnection of the whole world influence and change the conditions affecting the efficiency of sanctions. The Czech Republic would therefore prefer the use of "smart sanctions" targeted against leading representatives of a State that refuses to observe international law. In my opinion, such sanctions could include a ban on the issue of entry visas and the freezing of assets abroad. I think it would be particularly useful and expedient if the examination of the issue of peacekeeping also included the issue of sanctions. The Czech Republic believes that a similar approach — namely, the appointment of a panel of experts on this issue and subsequent discussion of a report drawn up by that panel — would be of immense benefit in improving our collective efforts to achieve peace and security by punishing perpetrators and not victims.

Allow me to mention how the Czech Republic views some of the most topical questions of international policy.

We believe that boosting defence capacities to protect against potential attack is an absolutely legitimate step by any government. In the case of National Missile Defence, however, we are talking of a concept about which there are many questions. In our opinion, security, as it is conceived of today, is comprehensive and integral — something that cannot be built up to the detriment of other partners.

The Czech Republic believes that the way to a safer world lies primarily in the continuation of the disarmament process and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, leading ultimately to a world free of nuclear weapons. We support the view that a more intense disarmament process will lead to savings in the funds spent on arms. Employing such savings for peaceful purposes would increase the ability of the international community to tackle pressing challenges such as the widening gap between rich and poor countries, and to deal with ethnic and religious conflicts, environmental preservation and so on. I would like to assure the Assembly that efforts to renew the momentum of the disarmament process will

continue to have the unequivocal support of the Czech Republic.

The Czech Republic therefore welcomes President Clinton's decision to leave the verdict on National Missile Defence to the new President.

The Czech Republic is monitoring the situation in the Middle East closely, as a traditional and active supporter of the peace process established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. The Czech Republic resolutely opposes the exploitation of the developments that took place after the Camp David summit to attack the peace process as a whole as well as the positive results achieved so far in negotiations between Israel and the Palestine National Council (PNC). The Czech Republic also emphatically rejects the misuse of this situation to carry out acts of violence, which can only result in unnecessary suffering and more victims. This is not the way to achieve the much-desired peace and stability in the Middle East. The Czech Republic supports the establishment of an independent Palestine, but it would prefer the emergence of such a state in an atmosphere of general support enjoying the consensus of all those involved. That is why we believe that the PNC's postponement of this step by two months creates a certain space for further deliberations. We wish them to be fruitful and successful in their outcome, although we are fully aware that even with good political will on both sides, the issues are thorny and laden with emotions and the burdens of history.

Last year from this rostrum I said that Kosovo would be the benchmark for the success of international institutions. I also said that Kosovo was going through a period when peace must be defended — that is, a period in which it is vital to achieve political stability and democratization, economic stabilization and the gradual development of the region.

We can be proud of what the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) have done to assist the return of ethnic Albanians who were chased out of their homes by Serbian forces.

Regardless of these tremendous efforts, however, we cannot be quite satisfied with the developments in Kosovo. In fact, some of the objectives of the relevant resolution have not been achieved. The positive developments we have seen so far in Kosovo concern mostly one ethnic group; the other still lives under a security threat. There is still a very long way to go before a multi-ethnic, multicultural and democratic way of life prevails in the area.

In keeping with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the possibility, on a permanent basis, of the return of non-Albanian ethnic groups and the building of a multi-ethnic, pluralistic and democratic society must remain our objectives, no matter how unattainable this aim may seem today. To give up on this objective would be tantamount to an admission of defeat on the part of the international community.

Certain negative features of the developments in Kosovo also hinder the chances for the democratization of Serbia. They play into the hands of those forces in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia which build their election campaigns on xenophobia, on the continuation of the political isolation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia, and on the continuation of sanctions.

In our view, the time has come seriously to consider taking further steps in Kosovo, including at the level of the Security Council. The Council has already taken the first steps in this direction, but it is imperative for it to return to the Kosovo issue soon. Obviously, many things will depend on the results of the forthcoming elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The world beyond the doors of this Hall is changing rapidly. Our children will live and work in an environment that we can only guess at. It is our collective responsibility to do all we can to ensure that it is a world of peace, prosperity, solidarity and tolerance.

The President: I give the floor to the Minister of Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) *(spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation)*: Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to congratulate most sincerely the Secretary-General on his comprehensive and detailed report outlining the most important challenges facing the international community in the twenty-first century.

The heads of State or Government of the States Members of the United Nations drew inspiration from this important document for the Millennium Summit, which has just concluded, at which they expressed their collective commitment and determination to adopt policies in favour of a globalization process benefiting the entire world population.

International cooperation among Governments will pave the way for an increasingly integrated system in which all States are inevitably involved, thus bringing all the peoples of the world closer together. San Marino believes that a wider globalization process of a juridical, ethical and cultural nature, in which solidarity is a major concern, is a sine qua non for the achievement of genuine economic globalization.

The Republic I represent is fully convinced that it is the responsibility of all countries of the world to ensure economic and social development and to address threats to international peace and security, and that the United Nations must play a central role in shaping our common future.

Against this backdrop, the question of the least developed countries burdened with a huge foreign debt must be re-examined, in the conviction that debt relief must form an integral part of the contribution offered by the international community to worldwide development.

Since the economic and social development of many countries is being irreparably hindered by debt problems, international solidarity is an imperative for everybody, just as human rights and dignity must not be violated in the name of market laws.

At the dawn of the third millennium, it is unacceptable that half of the world's population still lives in extreme poverty, with an income of barely two dollars a day. The indifference to this problem is a disgrace to humanity as a whole, since we are all well aware that poverty often triggers domestic and international conflicts and leads to exploitation and underdevelopment.

Against this gloomy background characterized by blatant contrasts, the international community must concentrate its efforts on the protection of the most vulnerable, who bear the heaviest burden, and must pay special attention to women and children, who are the main victims of poverty, violence and exploitation. Prompted by the conviction that legal cooperation, at an international level, is crucial to the protection of the rights of the child, San Marino was the first country to sign, this year, the Optional Protocol on child pornography, and the second country to sign the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The Republic is actively preparing to participate in the Special Session on Children to be held in September 2001, where progress made over the last decade in the protection of children will be reviewed. On that occasion, the international community will lay the foundations for ensuring that children enjoy their full juridical status.

Well aware that legal equality between men and women has become a major concern, both nationally and internationally, San Marino welcomes the results of the 1995 Beijing Conference, as well as those of its follow-up special review session held in New York last June.

The technology revolution, among the most important ones of the last decades, has caused radical changes in international relations. We all hope that information technology and the Internet will be increasingly used by the poorest countries as instruments of economic and cultural development. In this context, I wish to reiterate my country's commitment and willingness to take part in the latest United Nations projects aimed at reducing illiteracy through computer science and promoting the knowledge and use of new technologies in developing countries. In this way, new technologies, far from widening the gap between rich and poor countries, will benefit everybody.

In this spirit, the international community as a whole has the duty to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Africa and to help its populations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and the achievement of just and sustainable social development.

The entire international community has the moral and civil obligation to put an end to the conflicts afflicting many African countries and to counter the growing instability caused by ethnic and territorial divisions in some of these States or regions. In fact, if international peace is to be attained, the right of each individual to live in peace and security must be guaranteed.

The numerous and cruel acts of genocide witnessed by the twentieth century recently led the

international community to set up an International Criminal Court in order to prevent the authors of crimes against humanity from going unpunished. San Marino, the first European country to ratify the Statute of the Court, hopes that other Parliaments will add to the 19 having already deposited their instruments of ratification, so as to attain the minimum number, enabling the Court to be operative and become a juridical and moral authority.

On behalf of my country, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for having made the Organization more efficient and modern, through a series of reforms. Yet, with regard to the reform of the Security Council, Member States could not make any decision in the absence of a general agreement. In this regard, let me express my sincere hope for a comprehensive, democratic and fair reform of the Security Council soon.

At the beginning of a new millennium, the consolidation of a more efficient and representative governance, at an international level, bridging the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots", is our common expectation. Globalization being an irreversible process, we rely on the power and ability of this institution, which we believe in and which we are striving to strengthen.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Ismail Cem, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey.

Mr. Cem (Turkey): Our deliberations come in the wake of the historic Declaration just adopted at the Millennium Summit. Today, we look into the future with greater confidence. Our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter is undiminished. Our enthusiasm to turn our Organization's goals into solid realities remains high. In our quest for a better world, we are to derive our inspiration from our democratic values; our energy from the dynamism of our societies; and our strength from global solidarity and shared responsibility.

Today, there is no greater challenge for us than the prevention of conflicts and the achievement of peace. The horrors we witnessed in Europe, the Far East and Africa in the course of the past decade compel us with a sense of urgency to devise effective conflict prevention mechanisms and strategies. In his Millennium Report, the Secretary-General articulates the means for conflict prevention. These recommendations, when adopted and implemented, will provide the required capacity and credibility.

As an increasingly active member of the international community, providing civilian and military contingents to peace efforts in different spots, as far apart as South-Eastern Europe and East Timor, Turkey will give substance to United Nations efforts to prevent conflicts. As peace operations become a core function of the United Nations, we feel the urge to have a sounder financial basis. Turkey therefore supported the review of assessments for the apportionment of expenses for peacekeeping operations. We hope that these discussions will lead to a fairer redrawing of the scale.

The rapidly globalizing world provides an appropriate environment for Turkey, at the heart of Eurasia, to serve as a bridge between many nations and civilizations.

A priority task is securing peace and stability in the Balkans. The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, in which Turkey plays an active part, provides a good framework for cooperation and development in the region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, the full implementation of the Dayton/Paris accords is still our objective. We should preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multi-ethnic, multicultural, independent and sovereign State. Turkey will continue to contribute bilaterally and through multilateral endeavours to Bosnia and Herzegovina's state-building and reconstruction efforts.

In Kosovo, the United Nations has been able to put in place arrangements enabling the population to sustain their daily lives, but the current state of ethnic violence does not inspire hopes for a promising future. The United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo has set new rules for the administration of Kosovo. We look forward in particular to the full recognition of the vested rights of the Turkish community of Kosovo. We hope the shortcomings in this respect will soon be corrected, allowing the multi-ethnic and multicultural structure of Kosovo to be duly reflected in its public institutions and organs.

To turn to a positive development, I should underline that the constructive trend in our relations with Greece I mentioned in my address last year to the General Assembly continues. During the year, we have signed nine agreements for cooperation in a variety of areas, ranging from economy to culture. In this context,

the rapprochement between Turkey and Greece that we initiated has already brought about positive results.

The mutual rediscovery by the peoples of Turkey and Greece of one another and their reconciliation provided the main dynamics of the rapprochement. Almost on a daily basis, politicians, mayors, businessmen, trade-unionists, artists, writers, sportsmen and student groups visit each other across the Aegean or Thrace. Trade between the two countries is flourishing. An unprecedented flurry of activity is being observed along the Aegean coasts and in Thrace. Bilateral tourism is on the rise; joint investments are being carried out. A memorandum of understanding for a joint Turkey-Greece-European Union pipeline project to transport Central Asian and Caucasian energy to Western Europe has been signed.

All these positive developments have revealed once again that the Turkish and the Greek people are in favour not of confrontation, but of cooperation and friendship. The peoples of our two countries have not only superseded their politicians, but have raised a most significant barrier to any inclination to move backwards. The rapprochement between our two peoples constitutes the best guarantee against the inclinations of some politicians who, once in a while, yearn for the confrontational past.

Turkey's attention is also focused on developments in the southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Our historical, cultural and linguistic affinities with the countries of those regions serve as a major asset in our joint efforts to see the peoples of the region move towards higher levels of security and prosperity. Recent terrorist activities, however, pose a new threat to the peace and security of the Central Asian States and are of major concern. We are now seeking ways as to how we can best assist those countries in their struggle against terrorism.

Recent events demonstrate once again that we have to fight international terrorism collectively. We commend the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen the legal framework in the fight against terrorism and urge the General Assembly to keep the matter high on its agendas.

The developments in Afghanistan are cause for grave concern, as they have a direct impact on the stability of a huge region, including Central Asia. In the southern Caucasus, peace has yet to be achieved between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The international community has the obligation to contribute to ending the Armenian occupation of parts of Azerbaijan. Stability in Georgia, on the other hand, remains a goal. We have put forward the idea of a stability pact for the Caucasus and are following up our initiative. The regional countries must develop a growing awareness of the wide-ranging benefits of regional cooperation.

Here, I should also underline that attempts to defame other nations or to extract enmity from history will serve no useful purpose. No nation in the world has the right to use or distort history in order to achieve some kind of identity. Historical research should be left to scholars. In this day and age, we expect all nations to concentrate their efforts on cooperating with each other for the good of their peoples.

The Middle East peace process has reached a crucial phase. Turkey has always underlined the importance of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement on the basis of international legitimacy and within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the principle of land for peace.

The Palestinian issue lies at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the other hand, it has again been proven during the course of negotiations that Al-Quds is the decisive element for peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Progress was made at the Camp David summit, as it was the first occasion at which there was frank discussion of all issues, including the most sensitive. We are heartened to witness the willingness of both sides to continue negotiations and to explore all possibilities. We encourage the parties to remain engaged in order not to waste this historic opportunity.

Turkey is endowed with centuries of experience regarding the area, the wider region and its problems. We also have deep historical, moral and cultural ties with the peoples of the region. Turkey has good relations with the Israeli and the Palestinian parties alike and enjoys their trust. This prompted the parties to solicit our contributions in recent weeks to facilitating a better understanding and greater confidence between them. Turkey will continue these efforts as long as we all think them useful.

I would also like to underline that Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, within the framework of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), was a step in the right direction. We also hope that negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-

Lebanese tracks will resume soon and reach a mutually acceptable solution.

As we are recommitting ourselves to uphold the principles enshrined in the Charter with increased determination and vigour, we should likewise avoid being captive of approaches not based on reality. In the same vein, efforts to impose solutions that do not take into account the realities on the ground are doomed to failure.

In line with this very basic logic, the settlement of the Cyprus issue must be compatible with the existing realities on the island. To refresh memories on this particular subject which is sometimes distorted in public opinions by some powerful centres, I would like to summarize the historical background. Cyprus became an international problem as of December 1963 when the joint Turkish-Greek Republic was forcibly destroyed by the Greek Cypriots and an unconstitutional rule was set up at the expense of the Turkish Cypriots. The present situation in Cyprus came into being after the coup in 1974 engineered by Nikos Sampson, the coup leader, who was acting in coordination with the colonels' junta in Greece. This coup murdered many Greek Cypriots as well. The coup toppled Archbishop Makarios and forced him to flee the country. They staged widespread terror and moved to make the Turkish Cypriots subjects of a Greek Cyprus which was designed to be an integral part of mainland Greece.

Turkey, as one of the guarantor powers by virtue of the London and Zurich Agreements, intervened to terminate the ongoing massacres and to prevent the perpetration of similar atrocities in the future. Accordingly, Turkey averted an ethnic cleansing on the island and spared the Turkish Cypriots from sharing the tragic fate of the Muslim Kosovars and Muslim Bosnians of the future. Therefore, it would be a gross distortion of history to consider Turkish intervention as an occupation. On the contrary, it symbolizes liberation for nearly 200,000 Turkish Cypriots. Due to Turkish intervention, not only did the coup in Cyprus fail, but also the junta collapsed, and democracy returned to Greece.

Since 1974, peace and security has prevailed on the island. Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots live on the island as two independent states, two functioning democracies, representing two distinct peoples. In spite of a ruthless economic embargo imposed upon them by the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots have made considerable economic progress.

It is stipulated by the United Nations that both parties through separate referenda should approve a comprehensive settlement mutually acceptable to the two parties. In case the settlement is rejected by one of the parties in its referendum, the proposed solution becomes null and void. It is out of the question, therefore, for an international organization or any other grouping to impose its own solution on the parties. In this framework, the membership of "Cyprus" in the European Union, of which Turkey is not a full member, would be an indirect "enosis" and contrary to the London and Zurich Agreements.

If a mutually acceptable settlement is sincerely sought, then the model is quite clear, based on the realities of Cyprus: a confederation consisting of two states. As to this model, the two independent entities, by virtue of reaching an agreement between themselves, will transfer some of their functions to the confederal bodies. Thus, both the integrity and diversity that emanate from the realities of the island would be preserved. A mutually acceptable settlement in Cyprus cannot be reached through romantic descriptions but through realistic assessments. Therefore, to define the division of Cyprus as "the last wall of Europe" might sound fashionable but the connotations it brings and the parallelism it draws are totally erroneous. First of all, the line defined as a "wall" was not drawn by Turkey. This line was drawn by the United Nations peacekeeping forces in 1963 in order to protect the Turkish Cypriots from the assault of the Greek Cypriots. This is the year when the Greek Cypriots illegally got hold of the state apparatus and conducted violent assaults against Turkish Cypriots.

To refer to some recent arrangements by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on its sovereign soil as an act strengthening the existing barriers is irrelevant. For the "walls to tumble down" in Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot side must first free itself of its present frame of mind. Turkey favours a viable settlement of the Cyprus issue. It supports President Denktaş' confederal proposal and the proximity talks initiated by the Secretary-General.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my Government for the efforts of the Secretary-General as well as his Special Adviser on Cyprus, Mr. de Soto.

As a new century is being initiated, it is regrettable that the richly endowed continent of Africa is yet to receive its share from globalization. Especially the prosperous nations have to make a sustained effort to counter poverty and disease in Africa and give the peoples of Africa the hope and the means for a more promising future.

We have to vigorously pursue our efforts to make the world a safer place for all. Turkey has always encouraged efforts aimed at achieving meaningful and verifiable arms control and disarmament arrangements. In this context, we are also supportive of nuclear disarmament. It is with this understanding that we are signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We urge all countries that have not yet done so to do likewise.

One of the tools at the disposal of the United Nations to respond to countries that violate international peace and stability is sanctions. In recent years sanctions have become a prominent tool in United Nations collective efforts. There is now an on-going debate on the subject and an assessment is being made on the utility of sanctions.

The effectiveness of sanctions, as we see it, has two important aspects. The first has to do with whether the sanctions applied to a given country or area serve their intended purpose. This, in turn, raises the question of whether the sanctions are properly targeted and whether there is universal compliance. The second aspect concerns the proper implementation of sanctions. They are invoked on the premise that the decisions taken by the United Nations will be respected and that all will share the ensuing burden. Therefore, the collateral effects of the sanctions on third States, and especially the uneven burden they place on countries neighbouring the targeted State, are issues that must be addressed. Moreover, we also should see to it that the adverse effects of sanctions on innocent people, especially on children, women and the elderly, are minimized.

After the widespread economic setbacks of the past few years, the healing process of the global economy gathered momentum. Global integration has been further fuelled by bold leaps in science and technology. However, there is no room for complacency. To ensure that the benefits of revitalized growth are felt evenly on a global scale, continued and intensified efforts are needed at national and international levels.

It is not only the countries that have been exposed to the negative effects of globalization that stand to lose as a result. Global inequality threatens to become a source of political and social instability. The elimination of poverty should therefore remain our paramount goal. To reach this goal, we must achieve good governance, transparency and participation. We must also build strong social safety nets. But these will not yield the results being sought if we do not make adequate provision for the education our people. As physical borders begin to fade, the minds trapped within national domains must also change and be transformed.

We applaud the growing role of the United Nations in the economic and social sphere. With its role in breeding a culture of international cooperation and solidarity — a genuine culture of international cooperation and solidarity — the United Nations has indeed been a source of inspiration for us all.

In one respect we feel we possess most of the elements for a promising future, ranging from increased universal awareness of human dignity to strides in science and technology. Yet, at the same time, we are distressed to find ourselves plagued by war, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, racism, xenophobia, poverty and many other evils, both old and new. As the new millennium is ushered in, we must embrace rationalism, empathy and human solidarity in tackling our common problems. Only then can we relax, having fulfilled our responsibilities to the next generation.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. János Martonyi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Martonyi (Hungary) (*spoke in French*): I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this, the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, which serves as a bridge between two millennia. I would like to assure you that you will have the full cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to pay homage to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the valuable contribution he made to the work of this Assembly, as well as for his contribution to the preparations for the Millennium Summit.

During that Summit, less than one week ago, the heads of State and Government of the Member States of the United Nations adopted a Declaration. The specific commitments and objectives contained in that Declaration pose a complex challenge. Their implementation will require sustained efforts on the part of each of the members of the international community. In making those efforts, all of us — small and large, rich and poor — should keep in mind the common responsibility we bear for the future of our civilization.

The Secretary-General's millennium report and the Declaration it inspired reflect with the greatest eloquence the tasks and the requirements, as well as the worries and fears, facing our planet. And those ideas have been expressed at an opportune moment: the threshold of the new millennium. By taking up the work of implementing this major programme of action, we will be undertaking the indispensable process of addressing the increasingly pressing global problems we are facing.

One of the great lessons of the decade that has just passed, and also of the Millennium Summit, is that with the vanishing of the bipolar world order, East-West confrontation has been replaced by North-South problems. We believe that everything possible must be done so that this divide does not become rigid and so that the problems and difficulties it poses do not persist for too long. The Secretary-General's millennium report, the document adopted during the Summit of heads of State and Government, the many speeches we heard during the Summit — they all show that the international community recognizes and has assessed the scale of the challenges that globalization is forcing it to take up, and they show that the international community is searching for solutions to pressing issues, with the goal of reducing the appalling disparities in the world. There are many such issues and problems. They include poverty, the increasing economic and social gaps between the developed and developing countries, environmental issues, organized crime, international terrorism, AIDS and other diseases, drugs, human migration, the use of the Internet to sow intolerance and extremist ideas, and so forth. It is no exaggeration to say that, in order to ensure a stable, just and prosperous future for all humanity, we must, as soon as possible, get down to work on following up on the decisions that have been taken and on creating international legal standards to the extent necessary. These standards should also be developed in the fields of trade, finance and human rights — most specifically to protect the rights of ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities. As part of this undertaking, it is important to reinforce good governance and solidarity.

Let us recall that the great transformation of the world's political, security, socio-economic and scientific landscape has been accompanied by a remarkable evolution — the return of man to the central place that is properly his on the international chessboard, and by a rediscovery of the purpose of governmental action at the national and international levels. It is not a question of safeguarding States and Governments but of protecting people and communities, human beings, men and women who compose our societies. We must thus realize that political and legislative practices and our future activities in the codification of international law must adequately reflect that fundamental fact that we now see re-emerging.

In this context, the millions of victims of the conflicts afflicting the world and the daily tragedies we continually see mean that we cannot stand with our arms crossed, that we must try to find as quickly as possible a response to the practical and theoretical dilemmas that have been haunting us for some time. There are conflicts within States accompanied by serious violations of the human rights and genuine humanitarian crises. The national authorities, wherever they may be, must not be allowed to systematically persecute their own populations on a massive scale with complete impunity while taking shelter behind certain principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The international community must deal with these situations with a new vision and philosophy that reflect the realities and the spirit of our contemporary world.

As a result of our proximity to the ex-Yugoslavia, my country, Hungary, has felt the whole weight of these problems over the last decade. We have been witness to the serious delays on the part of the community of nations that has prevented it from acting in time in Bosnia and Rwanda, and elsewhere, with the appropriate means on the basis of a mandate corresponding to the real nature of the situation and with the necessary political will. That is why we welcome Mr. Brahimi's report on peacekeeping operations. We are ready to begin without delay the

necessary work to examine and implement these recommendations.

With regard to the Balkan region, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe that came into being one year ago is an initiative for prevention and reconstruction which offers the countries and the peoples of that part of the continent the possibility to leave their conflicts behind, to settle their differences and to open up new prospects for cooperation. Hungary attaches great importance to this and will make its own contribution to this vital enterprise, particularly in the field of strengthening democratic forces in the region and in human rights, including the rights of minorities.

Within this context, a democratic evolution in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will undoubtedly have a stabilizing effect on the region as a whole and will make it possible to bring to an end the isolation of Serbia from the major European and international currents. The elections scheduled for the end of September offer us an occasion to set this process under way. Such an evolution will enable us to normalize relations between Serbia and Montenegro.

One of the global problems facing us is undoubtedly the question of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We appeal for new progress in the field of light weapons and anti-personnel mines, the victims of which are basically innocent civilians.

The 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons marked an important step forward in the search for a safer future for humanity. The document adopted there reaffirms the central role of the treaty in the field of non-proliferation and the need for international agreement to this end. We hope that between now and the next review conference, to be held in 2005, we will be able to undertake the process of implementing the programme of action which was adopted to promote non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. From this point of view we attach particular importance to the initiation of work towards a treaty on the prohibition of fissile materials for military purposes.

We have also been following very closely the negotiations designed to draw up a verification protocol on the Biological Weapons Convention, which will enter a decisive phase on the eve of the review conference set for 2001. Hungary will chair the ad hoc group charged with formulating a mechanism in that connection and will do everything in its power to achieve the objective over the course of next year.

Hungary considers the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court one of the most important international achievements in the field of international law. This Statute is aimed at imposing rules of international humanitarian law and at ending an era of impunity. Nineteen States have already ratified the Statute, and the number of signatures is now 112. Hungary views this with pleasure and will pursue its own preparations for ratification of the Statute. We will continue to participate actively in negotiations to bring about universal acceptance of the Court while preserving the integrity of its Statute.

The reform of our world Organization has been on the agenda for some time. Recent events throughout the world — particularly unprecedented changes in the political and military order, economic evolution, progress in the fields of science and informatics, and the end of the century that symbolizes very tangibly the dawn of a new era full of both promises and uncertainty — have transformed the desire to see the United Nations adapt to the realities of our time into an imperative that will no longer tolerate any deviations or hesitation. Consequently, our first task is to face in a determined way the tremendous challenges awaiting us in the twenty-first century. The political will of Member States cannot be lacking if we really wish to make every effort to support the laudable efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve this adaptation process. This will involve, among other things, reforming the Security Council and the budgetary system, which is necessary to strengthen the credibility and efficacy of our world Organization.

The more quickly we can reform the Organization according to the requirements of this critical period, the more reassured people throughout the world will be as to the future of the planet.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, His Excellency Mr. Alojz Peterle.

Mr. Peterle (Slovenia): Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, and your country, Finland, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia for his work as President of the General

Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, and to commend him for the guidance he provided throughout the year.

I would also like to commend the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, for his inspiring contribution to the noble goals of peace, justice, development and the strengthening of our Organization.

Last week, world leaders gathered here to direct the Organization for the next century. The golden thread of the Millennium Summit was concern for the well-being of all human beings and the common determination to free each and every nation and each and every human being from want and fear, to sustain the future of humanity and to renew the United Nations accordingly. The common goal of all the discussions was to provide for human security in all its complexity and to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality, equity, solidarity and tolerance at a global level.

The United Nations has the obligation to protect the civilian population, particularly the most vulnerable — children, women, the elderly and the disabled — against gross and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law, whether in inter-State or intra-State conflicts. The strengthening of international law is an important element in achieving this goal. Special attention should be given to exploring new methods of conflict prevention, as well as to making better use of those that have proved to have had good results. We should all be engaged more decisively in building a culture of prevention and modernizing and equipping the United Nations for the task.

It is also imperative for the United Nations to elaborate a doctrine for humanitarian intervention based on a modern interpretation of the Charter and in line with new international relations and norms. We listened with interest to the statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada in this Hall on the establishment of an independent international commission on intervention and State sovereignty.

There is nothing in the Charter that could possibly justify crimes against the civilian population. Neither is there anything in the Charter that could possibly justify the fact that large parts of the world are still living in poverty or that some States are stagnating due to the debt burden, while the rest of the world is enjoying a state of well-being. Technological and economic development does bring the world together, but globalization also brings problems closer and increases the mutual responsibility for finding solutions to them.

At the Millennium Summit, we adopted a comprehensive and far-reaching Declaration. Leaders put before us difficult but achievable goals. Member States should now look carefully into how they can contribute nationally to the implementation of the goals at the global level. As a responsible Member of the Organization, Slovenia intends to prepare its plan of action for the implementation of the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. I want to take this opportunity today to mention some of the efforts that we intend to make.

As a country that has just joined the donor community, Slovenia will look closely at how it can organize better in order to extend more assistance to the developing countries and the countries in the region, thus contributing to the goals regarding development and poverty eradication.

We have just signed the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while the National Assembly is supposed to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court by the end of the year. Both documents are among the most important building blocks for ensuring greater protection for civilians in conflict situations. We are looking forward to the early functioning of the International Criminal Court in order to ensure the more effective, equitable and efficient delivery of international justice.

Slovenia is determined to help in the process of strengthening the Organization as an indispensable foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and just world. Once again, we want to stress the need for the enlargement of the Security Council in its permanent and elected membership, as well as with regard to the reform of its working methods. The credibility of the United Nations depends on its ability to carry out its responsibilities in full, especially with regard to maintaining peace and security. We therefore welcome and commend the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and we are looking forward to the early implementation of its recommendations.

In this context, we believe that the reform of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations is a necessary condition for a renewed role for the United Nations in this field. A new scale of assessments that more accurately reflects the capacity to pay should be

adopted during this session. I have the honour to announce that the Government of Slovenia has decided to voluntarily relinquish the discount it is no longer entitled to with regard to its financial contribution, and that, starting from next year, it is ready to pay its share for peacekeeping operations in full.

Slovenia is also gradually increasing its participation in peacekeeping operations — those of the United Nations, as well as regional ones. We are committed to further increasing our support to these operations, not only with military personnel, but also with civilian police and humanitarian personnel.

The basic aim of United Nations actions should be to ensure human security, with security being physical, economic and social, rather than legal. We note with satisfaction that the interests of individuals are, indeed, rightly at the very centre of the Millennium Declaration. Slovenia will continue to participate in the group of like-minded countries, which is determined to give full meaning and specific, practical expression to the concept of human security.

The problem of the illicit arms flow of small arms and light weapons is such that it requires additional efforts. We hope that the forthcoming international conference on small arms and light weapons will pave the way for regulating and controlling the proliferation of unimpeded access to small arms and light weapons — the weapons most used in today's armed conflicts.

Member States should also continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of mine action programmes, as well as to strengthen all steps and activities in mine action and mine victim assistance. For its part, Slovenia will continue to support the efforts of its International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance to extend its activities to the whole region of South-East Europe. The results achieved in recent years are promising for the activities of the Trust Fund in the future.

I would also like to briefly address the situation in the region of South-East Europe. We are all aware that there will be no self-sustaining peace and stability in the region without the full cooperation and integration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For obvious reasons, this cannot be expected of the current regime in Belgrade. The international community must cooperate with, support and encourage the forces within the country that are striving for democracy, peace, reconciliation, economic recovery and a return to simple normalcy. We share the hopes of seeing the new democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia soon as a part of a stable and prosperous South-East Europe. We also share the hopes that this country will soon join us in the United Nations, as well as in the other international and regional organizations, in accordance with the usual procedures and practices for admission of new members to these organizations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Adbulla, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman.

Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdullah (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to extend to you, Mr. President, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Millennium Assembly. We are confident that your expertise and knowledge of international issues are an outstanding asset that will enrich the deliberations of this session and help the Assembly reach a successful conclusion. We assure you of our readiness to cooperate with you in fulfilling the objectives to which we all aspire.

I wish to extend our gratitude and appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the friendly Republic of Namibia, for the successful manner in which he steered the work of the previous session. That session was marked by a genuine desire to enhance and reinvigorate the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our warmest appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his strenuous efforts and commendable endeavours to promote the role of the United Nations and the development of its organs, in order to cope with expectations attached to the Organization in the third millennium.

The Sultanate of Oman welcomes the accession of the Republic of Tuvalu to United Nations membership. We hope that its membership will enrich the efforts of the international community to reach the noble goals of this important international forum in a manner that satisfies the hopes and aspirations of all peoples of the world.

Our heads of State and Government have already described our main concerns and preoccupations during

the Millennium Summit. They perceptively identified a number of lofty values and principles that will guide present and future generations towards secure and stable living conditions based on cooperation and peace. If this goal is to be achieved, we must remain fully committed to it.

We bid farewell to a century, the memory of which includes a host of calamities and human suffering, due to both natural and man-made causes. That century was also marked by many bold and visionary initiatives that greatly benefited humanity.

This stage of the third millennium is characterized by great technological progress that has opened vast horizons for development and prosperity. Yet the emerging international order, commonly called "globalization", has created and increased economic, social and political disparities at both the international and national levels. Globalization presents many concerns and challenges to developing countries, sometimes with unpredictable results. This is a real hindrance to the growth and progress of developing countries, limiting the effectiveness of their economic integration into a globalized economy.

We in the Sultanate of Oman support globalization. However, present indications and approaches, stemming from the World Trade Organization, point toward wealthy countries banding together with the aim of using that Organization as a tool to advance their own interests, to open the markets of developing countries for their own trade and to deplete natural resources of developing countries, regardless of any negative economic and social impact.

One of the most important factors that led to the failure of the Seattle Conference to achieve its expected conclusions was the aggregation of about 20 countries within the Organization attempting to impose their philosophies on the entire world. This conduct is based on an old doctrine of discriminatory policies and selectivity, which insinuates the presence of hidden disputes among various countries. If the World Trade Organization were to be transformed into a wrestling arena, globalization and free trade would not then be able to meet the needs of developing countries.

Furthermore, if developing countries are to survive and to uphold the basic rights of their citizens, they must obtain their fair share of the fruits of globalization. It is necessary to enact laws and regulations and to honour agreements in an equal manner that applies to all, because the dominance of minority law contradicts the principles of good governance. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to devise new measures to assure the utilization of ever-growing technological progress so as to achieve prosperity and development for all.

The international economy continues to prosper after the setback of the 1997-1998 recession, following the economic crash of emerging markets. We need to redouble our efforts in order to avoid recurrence of this. When the G-8 countries met in Okinawa, Japan, they were obliged to consider the problems of the developing countries. The financial assistance offered by the G-8 was itself vivid proof that advanced information technologies are designed in such a manner that they can be monopolized by some and not accessed by others, except with great difficulty and at colossal cost. However, we still welcome some of the decisions of the Okinawa Summit, particularly the financial assistance pledged to combat certain debilitating diseases.

The decision of the G-8 to invite the Group of 77, for the first time, to its deliberations was not merely a ceremonial event. It made the vast disparity that exists between developed and developing countries all the more tangible. The Okinawa Summit addressed the problem of debt, which we believe should be totally abolished, and reviewed the policies of the International Monetary Fund and international financial mechanisms. Among those policies, the fluctuation of international currencies in particular has created difficult economic conditions for developed countries, let alone for countries with small economies that have to trade their resources for hard currency.

The stumble of the Asian economies occurred because of the power of the free market, and largely because of currency instability. The prosperity achieved by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) during decades of dedicated work evaporated. Developing countries therefore have every right to take all necessary precautions against the recurrence of a similar situation.

Together with a number of other countries, the Sultanate of Oman has played a constructive role in establishing and launching the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation. It has done so because the countries of the Indian Ocean possess natural resources and enjoy a geographic location

between three continents and because it is convinced of the importance of that region as a vital economic vein for all its member States and their peoples. The launching of this new Association to join the many regional economic groupings that exist in the world today is a manifestation of the firm desire of its member States to promote such a grouping, which enjoys huge potential and looks forward to creating a huge market.

Based on my country's belief in the importance of regional cooperation as a means to propel the wheels of development and exchange expertise in different fields, we are working on an agreement to establish a regional cooperation group for fisheries in the Indian Ocean. We hope that that initiative will soon see the light of day, thereby bringing about many benefits in the service of regional stability and development. In this context, we look forward to a pragmatic translation of the objectives of the General Assembly Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

Since the dawn of the Omani renaissance, on 23 July 1970, we in the Sultanate of Oman have embraced peace and dialogue as basic principles. We are convinced that dialogue is the natural foundation upon which all forms of conflict between States and peoples can be resolved. Throughout history, mankind has aspired to enhance confidence on the basis of agreed creative ideas that deepen and widen common interests and mutual benefits. We believe that dialogue, rather than conflict and confrontation, will always remain the surest path to security and stability.

The tripartite Camp David summit on the peace process in the Middle East was an extremely significant political step and a display of unique courage by the summit participants. The summit imposed upon itself the task of discussing and negotiating the fundamental issues of a final settlement in an unprecedented and distinguished manner, particularly with regard to the future of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We express our admiration for, and appreciation of, the historic role and great efforts made by the President of the United States, Bill Clinton. Despite the fact that the summit did not produce a final agreement between Palestine and Israel, it nevertheless opened the door for dialogue on the most complex issues. Significant progress has been achieved on those issues, and the summit established an important understanding of the true scope of peace and the spiritual and emotional sentiments attached to it. It is now vital to conclude an agreement that will lay the cornerstone for lasting peace.

In our view, there has been tangible and clear progress regarding the positions and claims of each party as well as their capability to complete the negotiations. We are confident that the continuation of negotiations and contacts between Palestinians and Israelis, on all levels, is the proper and responsible way to reach the desired objective of establishing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. We look forward with confidence to a second round of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, with the continued sponsorship of the United States. Time has bestowed upon all parties a historic opportunity to put in place a solid foundation for peace.

We reiterate our full support to the Palestinian people and their rights to self-determination on their land and to establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In order to strengthen the pillars of peace and security in the region, there is no other sovereignty possible in Al-Quds Al-Sharif except that of the Palestinian State. We expect the State of Israel to understand this fact, which means that the sovereignty of the State of Palestine over Al-Quds Al-Sharif would also allow Israelis full freedom of access to worship and conduct their rituals in peace and security.

We strongly support the position of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic concerning the restoration of its land to the line of 4 June 1967. We encourage Israel to resume negotiations on this important track in accordance with legitimate international principles and resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. Israel should not feel exposed to security threats in the future because a peace founded on those principles, whether that peace be with Syria, Palestine or Lebanon, will build an effective relationship and partnership that will serve the purposes of security and stability. This, by itself, is one of the most important guarantees of mutual security and stability, especially if it is based on economic development within the context of globalization.

Despite all serious international and regional efforts to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq, the overall situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate as a result of the economic embargo imposed on that country over the last 10 years.

Therefore, we call for the establishment of a mechanism to end the siege and to lift the embargo that has undoubtedly done great harm to the people of Iraq.

Despite the fact that sanctions regime were intended as a political mechanism to guarantee that Governments fulfil their commitments in accordance with United Nations resolutions, that mechanism has now become a weapon that harms the basic rights of peoples and societies. This clearly contradicts the letter and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Accordingly, we call upon the Security Council to adopt new policies and effective mechanisms that will relieve the suffering imposed on States such as Iraq, Libya and the Sudan.

The Security Council, in accordance with its responsibilities as enshrined in the Charter, should play a positive and unifying role in the maintenance of international security and stability, with the aim of developing new vision, for economic globalization.

The mechanisms available to the Security Council with regard to Iraq are no longer positive tools. United Nations inspectors have exerted substantial efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and have destroyed such known weapons. This could represent sufficient grounds to review the situation once again and determine how to end this tragedy. New mechanisms could be established that would enable the Security Council to continue monitoring Iraq's implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions once economic sanctions have been lifted.

We do not believe that it is justifiable to punish a population simply on the basis of fear and suspicion. The Security Council should protect the Iraqi people from the deterioration of their living conditions. The United Nations has a historic responsibility to cooperate with Iraq in order to minimize the intense suffering that could befall the people of Iraq in future. We look forward to Iraq's positive cooperation in clarifying the fate of the Kuwaitis who remain captive inside Iraq.

We deeply appreciate the efforts made by the Secretary-General in preparing his annual report. It is important to be willing to adopt a new vision for the restructuring of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, as its principal organ, whose primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. We should consider the expansion of its membership to promote equitable representation, and reassess United Nations activities in regions of conflict and tension, ensuring that there is no interference in States' internal affairs.

We fear that the United Nations could become a direct participant in regional conflicts, which would entail financial and moral obligations that it may not be able to fulfil.

We have in the past emphasized the need for international cooperation, which the United Nations can foster in support of regional organizations to achieve peace and development.

The problems of the African continent are intensifying, and it is vital to uncover the causes of these problems. It is incumbent upon the international community to work together and redouble its efforts in a positive and effective manner to resolve current political and social problems as well as ameliorate deteriorating health conditions. The United Nations should elaborate a solid plan in which all States would participate and contribute to the development of Africa instead of fighting for control of its wealth.

We are facing real challenges, which we must be prepared to confront with courage if we are to focus on all aspects of development. We are in need of a new century and a new millennium marked by a sound balance between material values and humankind's legacy of ethical and spiritual values. We are in need of a world in which the strong sympathize with the weak and help them out of their plight. We need a plan of action to increase the standard of living of all peoples throughout the world.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Levens, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname.

Mrs. Levens (Suriname): On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname, I would like first of all to join previous speakers in extending my congratulations to Mr. Harri Holkeri on his assumption of the presidency of the fifty-fifth Millennium session of the General Assembly.

Allow me also to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the outstanding and fruitful way in which he guided the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

My delegation wishes to express its deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his

continuing and tireless efforts in steering the United Nations through the uncharted waters of world affairs while adapting it to the new global forces of change.

We welcome Tuvalu into the family of nations, and the Republic of Suriname looks forward to working together with it in implementing the principles and goals of the Organization.

This Millennium Assembly is a unique opportunity to take stock of, and to reflect on, recent experiences with the phenomenon of globalization, which continues to dominate developments in the economic, political and cultural field at both the national and international levels, affecting the daily lives of millions of people, their institutions and relations between States.

We recognize that while globalization can be a powerful and dynamic force in the promotion of economic growth and development, it also poses risks and new challenges to individuals and nations alike. The fact of the matter is that globalization has generated new economic disparities, as its benefits remain highly concentrated in only a few countries. This has brought about increased vulnerability and economic instability, in particular to the least developed countries and to the structurally weak and vulnerable small States.

Many of these countries have difficulty in coping with the increased competition arising from trade liberalization and lack the capacity to take advantage of the new opportunities brought about by globalization, which in turn puts them at risk of marginalization and even complete exclusion — the so-called big losers of globalization.

It is for this reason that, during the recently held Millennium Summit, consensus was reached at the highest political level that globalization must be considered in the wider context of development and of our shared responsibility to ensure that, through a more inclusive, transparent and participatory decision-making process in international economic issues, the benefits of globalization are accessible to all on an equal footing.

We also concur with the view that the United Nations, as the most universal forum, has a crucial and central role to play in forging understanding and consensus among its Members, so as to create more opportunities for all, and indeed not to leave billions of people in a state of poverty and exclusion. We look forward to concrete actions to be taken in this regard.

All nations have a collective responsibility to address current global concerns, such as underdevelopment and acute poverty, the growing inequality within and among nations, violent conflicts and civil wars which cause untold human suffering in the South and are fuelled by the global arms bazaar, environmental degradation, refugees and migration, HIV/AIDS and other threats to public health, bridging the "digital divide" and the emergence of global criminal conglomerates.

In the context of the aforementioned, we welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to create a digital task force with the aim of bridging the "digital divide". In order not to lag behind in our present era dominated by the advances in information and communications technology, the President of the Republic of Suriname launched a national information and communications technology initiative in his inaugural statement on 12 August of this year in order to catch the "Internet Express" without delay and to promote national access to information and communication services at all levels of education and all areas of the public domain. We welcome the contribution of the Kingdom of Norway to assist the small island developing States (SIDS) in this regard.

Last April, the developing countries met in Havana and, in a renewed spirit of cooperation, solidarity and shared responsibilities, they agreed to close ranks and implement an action-oriented programme to assist the developing countries in bridging the gap with their more affluent partners from the North. Although essential in contributing to development, South-South cooperation is not a replacement for North-South cooperation; nevertheless better relations between the members of the South will contribute to better relations between the South and the North.

Unfortunately, globalization and trade liberalization have not created the necessary conditions to accelerate growth and development for small and vulnerable States. On the contrary, these countries have been further marginalized in world economic affairs and are threatened by the provisions of the World Trade Organization (WTO), demanding an end to the special and preferential arrangements, enacted solely to level the playing field. We, therefore, reiterate our request

for the international community's early adoption of a vulnerability index so as to consider assistance to these countries, based on their specific vulnerabilities and not solely on their gross domestic product. We are pleased that an appeal was made in the Millennium Declaration to enact such a vulnerability index.

Recently, the 12 Presidents of South America assembled in Brasilia to discuss daunting issues that are common to the region and to pledge their political will and support as a firm foundation for enhanced cooperation among their respective countries. We thank the Government of Brazil for so gracefully hosting this Summit. The Declaration coming out of that meeting, in letter and spirit, underlined the necessity of closer cooperation between our countries in order to be able to adapt successfully to the demands of globalization.

At the dawn of the new millennium, the Government of Suriname considers it of crucial importance that Member States achieve tangible results in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in maintaining peace and reinforcing international security for all States.

The reform of the Security Council remains crucial for our efforts to make the United Nations more effective in dealing with global peace and security issues. So far, however, reaching consensus on how to restructure and reform this important body has eluded us as a consequence of differences among the Member States with respect to the scope and nature of the needed changes. My Government reiterates its view that the membership of this Council should be increased with members from both the developed and developing world and considers in this context the proposals presented by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as instrumental.

We also believe that agreement must be reached on defining the relationship between the Council and other principal organs of the United Nations, such as the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. We are of the opinion that the Security Council should focus its actions on creating a peaceful security environment, while the temporarily established United Nations involvements related to socio-economic and political development in affected countries should be coordinated by the Economic and Social Council and/or the General Assembly. Such an arrangement, based on the Charter provisions, will undoubtedly contribute to greater effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations, while limiting the influence of national policy considerations on its activities. Let us use the momentum created by the Millennium Summit to strengthen our resolve in reaching a consensus on this matter as soon as possible.

The Government of Suriname wishes to underscore the importance of the United Nations as the universal forum to enable Member States to reach consensus on issues related to peace, security, development and international economic cooperation. We wish to express our gratitude to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for resuming bilateral cooperation between our countries and to thank them for their support in this area.

The United Nations Charter embodies lofty and noble principles that remain valid today, as was reiterated by all the Heads of State and Government at the recently held Millennium Summit.

In order to make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the hands of the world's people, we must continue to be guided by these principles in conducting national and international affairs. In this regard, it is essential to honour the commitment to providing the necessary financial means in a timely and predictable manner in order to enable the United Nations to fulfil its mandates.

Finally, as we enter the new millennium in an emerging global village, we must bear in mind that we are one human family in all our diversity, living in one common homeland, the planet Earth, and that we must therefore cooperate in creating a more just, more sustainable and more peaceful world in which everyone will live in a clean environment with a fair distribution of the Earth's resources — indeed, as the Secretary-General has called for in his millennium report, a world free from want, free from fear, that does not compromise the ability of our planet to provide for the needs of our children and for future generations. My country stands ready to play its part and to contribute to this, our common endeavour.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.